

[Fannie Perry]

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(Dugan, Ida M.)

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Omaha Dist. #2 [525?] Folkways (Life sketch) Dup EARLY EXPERIENCES IN
NEBRASKA BY FANNIE HURLBUT PERRY

First Chapter.

After long years on a farm near Macomb, Illinois, my father H. M. Hurlbut, yielded to the call of the west. Two brothers, Everett and Warren, who were living in a little village near Omaha, had persuaded him that larger opportunities awaited him there. So in the seventies he packed up all his belongings and loaded them into a freight car. Since the live stock must be watered and fed, he was obliged to ride in the caboose.

My mother, with three small girls went ahead. Upon reaching Council Bluffs, we found that the bridge over the Missouri river was not completed and we crossed the river on a shaky-looking footbridge. Cold winds and icy boards however, did not add to our pleasure.

Uncle Warren met us and under his guidance we finally reached Nebraska soil, where an old-fashioned conveyance awaited us and we set out over endless and seemingly trackless prairie to the spot which was to be our home.

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We were delighted to reach a comfortable home where light, heat, food and a warm welcome awaited us. This house was the home of Uncle Everett Hurlbut, who was one of the pioneer Congregational ministers of Nebraska. (1)

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As soon as our goods came we went to the house that was to be our new home, it was quite an undertaking however, to make our furnishings harmonize with the new surroundings. The house had been built by a Mr. E.H. Sherwood from the East, who had come West with the idea of developing a large stock farm and had already completed several of the needed buildings, large barns, a carriage house and servants quarters.

The family intended to live for a time in the house we were to occupy until the farm was ready for them to build a home for themselves. Mr. Sherwood however evidently became discouraged and finally gave up the whole project. Mr. Warren Hurlbut and my father rented the farm and the two families shared the house. To us, this house was a mansion with its many spacious rooms, large halls and verandas, we really could not imagine wanting anything better.

Several families from the East came to this village of Irvington bringing with them high ideals in regard to church and school. There were the Knights, two brothers and a sister Mrs. Hibbard. Their adjoining homes faced the main highway, along this highway they planted trees, which when we saw them, had grown so large that their branches met forming an archway overhead. This spirit in the community was a forerunner of the time when everyone would plant trees on 'Arbor day'.

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Several families of the Brewsters, lived in another section. One of them, Silas Brewster, being a deacon in the church

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loved and honored by the whole community. His wife was a daughter of Reverend Reuben Gaylord another pioneer Congregational minister of Nebraska.

Another group consisted of the Stoddards; Mr. and Mrs. Emerson Stoddard, a young couple, two brothers Elijah and Wilbur, and a sister Julia. Another sister, Mrs. Louise Wenrick, who came twice to visit than she seemed like someone out of a story book with her fine manners and stylish gowns. Mr. and Mrs. E. Stoddard lived at the crossroads. Their home, near the center of the village, was to me the center of interest and I spent many happy hours there.

When later a baby girl, Cora, arrived, Hattie Brewster and I felt that we were personally responsible for her well-being. Some years later when the family went back east Cora Stoddard became a noted welfare worker.

The Hurlbut family at first consisted of the three brothers but later another, Augustus, lame since childhood, joined them with his bride. In spite of his lameness he did so many worthwhile things; he was a good musician, business man, and an all around man. Later they moved to Kearney, Nebraska. Later Everett Hurlbut went to California, where he hoped to regain his health, but finally came back to Nebraska and spent the remainder of his life in Omaha.

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Two of his children lived in Nebraska, Mrs. Bruce McCulloch of Omaha and Mrs. Woodruff of Lincoln. Since Warren Hurlbut's wife longed to return to their old home in Iowa they moved to Clarinda,

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Iowa, but after a few years they were obliged to move to Villisca. Not one of the family however, is now living.

There were many other families in the vicinity of Irvington and each contributed something to the interesting life of the community. The parsonage was one of the highlights and its influence was far-reaching. To its doors we turned for encouragement, comfort and stimulation.

Many delightful gatherings were held in the school house before a church was built. The activities of the church and school were the chief interests of the people.

Everyone went to church in those days, where they learned to live and work with each other, and the happy natural life in the village became the expression of their simple belief in their Creator.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION:

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